



Los Angeles County
Department of Regional Planning


Planning for the Challenges Ahead



Richard J. Bruckner
Director

October 19, 2016

TO: Susan Tae, AICP
Hearing Officer

FROM: Carl Nadela, AICP 
Zoning Permits East Section

SUBJECT: **Project No. R2015-02353-(5)**
Conditional Use Permit No. 201500095
HO Meeting: November 1, 2016
Agenda Item: 12

The above-mentioned item is a request for a Conditional Use Permit to authorize a new wireless telecommunication facility located in the parking lot of an existing church. This item was first scheduled for public hearing on November 17, 2015 and was subsequently continued to March 15, 2016 and June 21, 2016, without the public hearing being opened.

On June 21, 2016, the Hearing Officer heard a presentation from staff, opened the public hearing and requested that the applicant provide additional information regarding the Alternative Sites Analysis conducted for the project. The Hearing Officer also requested additional information regarding County Counsel's legal opinion on staff's proposed recommendation. To allow the applicant and staff time to submit and review the requested information, the Hearing Officer continued the public hearing to September 6, 2016, and subsequently to November 1, 2016.

In response to the Hearing Officer's request, the applicant has submitted the attached Alternatives Sites Analysis and photo-simulations for the project. Also, staff has consulted with County Counsel and confirmed that staff's analysis, determination and recommendation for the project is within the local permitting authority of the county.

In addition, please find attached revised Findings in association with the alternative Denial motion indicated below.

If you need further information, please contact Carl Nadela at (213) 974-6435 or cnadela@planning.lacounty.gov. Department office hours are Monday through Thursday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Department is closed on Fridays.

SUGGESTED CONTINUANCE MOTION:

I, THE HEARING OFFICER, CONTINUE THE PUBLIC HEARING FOR CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NUMBER 201500095 AND DIRECT THE APPLICANT TO REDESIGN THE PROJECT TO REFLECT A COLOCATION WITH THE EXISTING SPRINT FACILITY AT THE SITE.

ALTERNATIVE DENIAL MOTION:

I, THE HEARING OFFICER, CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING AND DENY CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NUMBER 201500095 PURSUANT TO THE ATTACHED FINDINGS.



Verizon Wireless Alternatives Analysis

Loma Alta

2949 Lincoln Avenue, Altadena, CA 91101

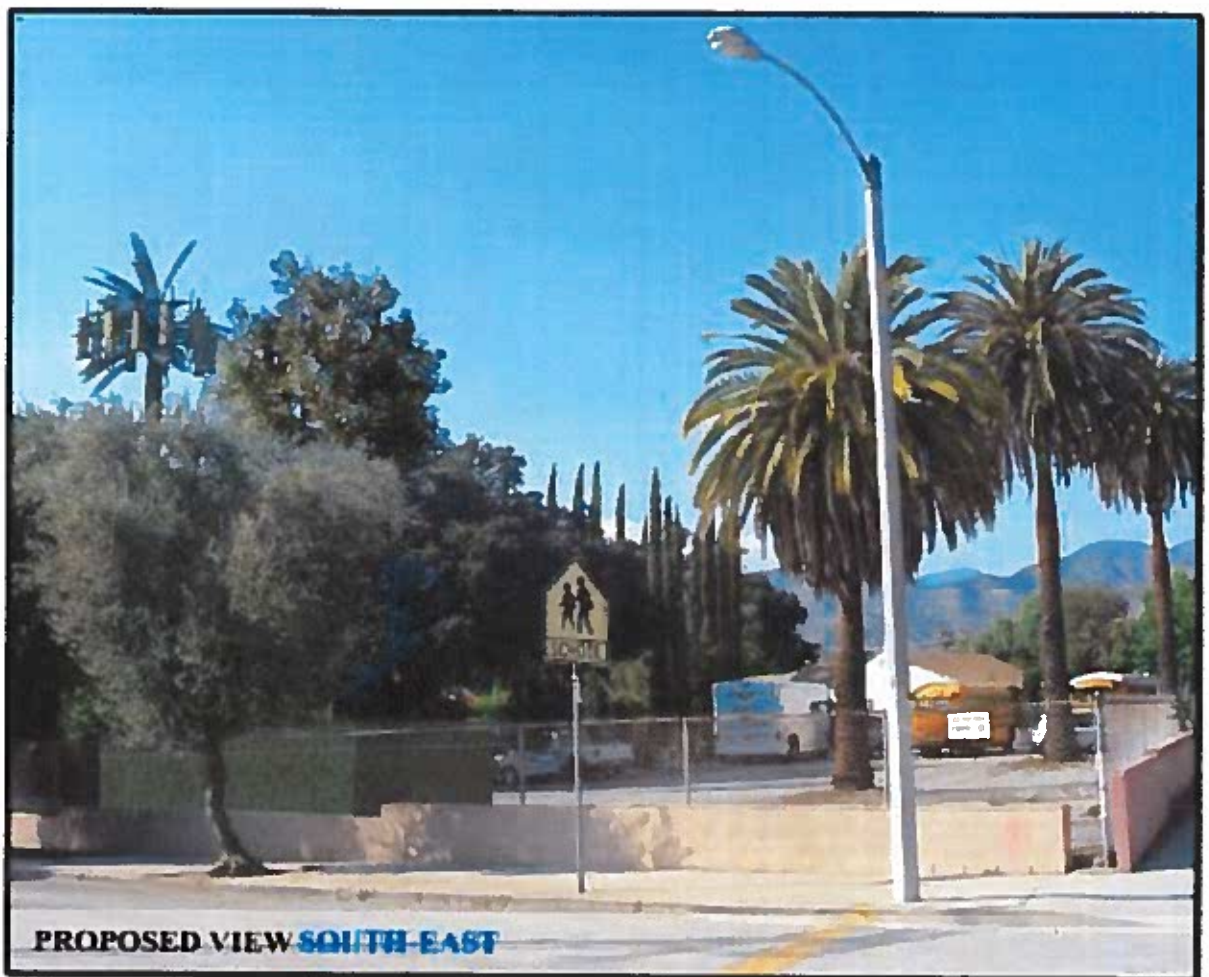


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I. Executive Summary

Verizon Wireless seeks to fill a significant gap in its coverage and network capacity in the Altadena area of Los Angeles County. Based on a review of alternatives as set forth in the following analysis, Verizon Wireless believes that concealing antennas in a stealth mono-eucalyptus treepole facility (the "Proposed Facility") constitutes the least intrusive alternative to provide service to the identified gap based on the values expressed in the Los Angeles County Municipal Code (the "Code").

II. Significant Gap

There is a significant gap in Verizon Wireless coverage and network capacity in the Altadena area of Los Angeles County. In-building service coverage is lacking in this area, which is composed primarily of residential areas. Further, Verizon Wireless facilities serving much of the gap area are nearing capacity exhaustion, and Verizon Wireless must place an additional facility in the vicinity of the Proposed Facility to provide new coverage and relieve existing antenna sectors to ensure the reliability of the network. The identified "significant gap" in network coverage is more fully described in the previously submitted "*Loma Alta RF Justification Letter 5.18.16*".

III. Methodology

Once a significant gap has been determined, Verizon Wireless seeks to identify a location and design that will provide required coverage through the "least intrusive means" based upon the values expressed by local regulations. In addition to seeking the "least intrusive" alternative, sites proposed by Verizon Wireless must be technically feasible. In this regard, Verizon Wireless reviews the radio frequency propagation, elevation, grading requirements, height of any existing structures, available electrical and telephone utilities, access, available ground space, zoning and other critical factors such as a willing landlord in completing its site analysis.

IV. Analysis

Collocation Review

Verizon Wireless first sought to identify existing wireless facilities that could potentially serve as a collocation facility to serve the Significant Gap, reviewing the following existing wireless facility.

1. Sprint Monopalm Facility

Address: 2949 Lincoln Avenue Zoning: R1-7500



Verizon Wireless considered collocation on this existing 53' high monopalm. This location is not viable. Verizon Wireless needs an antenna centerline of 41' using 8' high antennas and the monopalm does not allow for this height. This centerline height is necessary to maintain network quality and avoid interference with existing Verizon Wireless facilities and to avoid obstructions caused by surrounding buildings and trees. Sprint has an antenna centerline of 45' and must have room for 6' high antennas and a minimum clearance of 5' "tip to tip" between their antennas and Verizon Wireless antennas to avoid interference between the carriers. The design of the monopalm simply doesn't allow the wireless carriers to co-exist on this monopalm.

Rooftop Facilities

Lacking a feasible collocation opportunity, Verizon Wireless next reviewed the area for rooftop opportunities on buildings with sufficient height and proper geographic location to meet network objectives. Two (2) potential rooftop locations were reviewed and identified as not viable as follows.

2. Aveson Leadership Academy

Address: 575 West Altadena Drive

Zoning: C2



Verizon Wireless considered a rooftop installation with screening atop this building. Despite efforts to work with the property owner, the property owner is not interested in leasing space to Verizon Wireless.

3. Sacred Heart Parish Bell Tower

Address: 2889 N Lincoln Avenue, Altadena

Zoning: R1-7500



Verizon Wireless considered remodeling this bell tower to accommodate the twelve (12) 8' panel antennas and ancillary equipment. The church will not allow Verizon Wireless to install their facilities within the steeple because there is no way to maintain the prominence and historical value/use of the bell tower while accommodating Verizon's antennas & equipment.

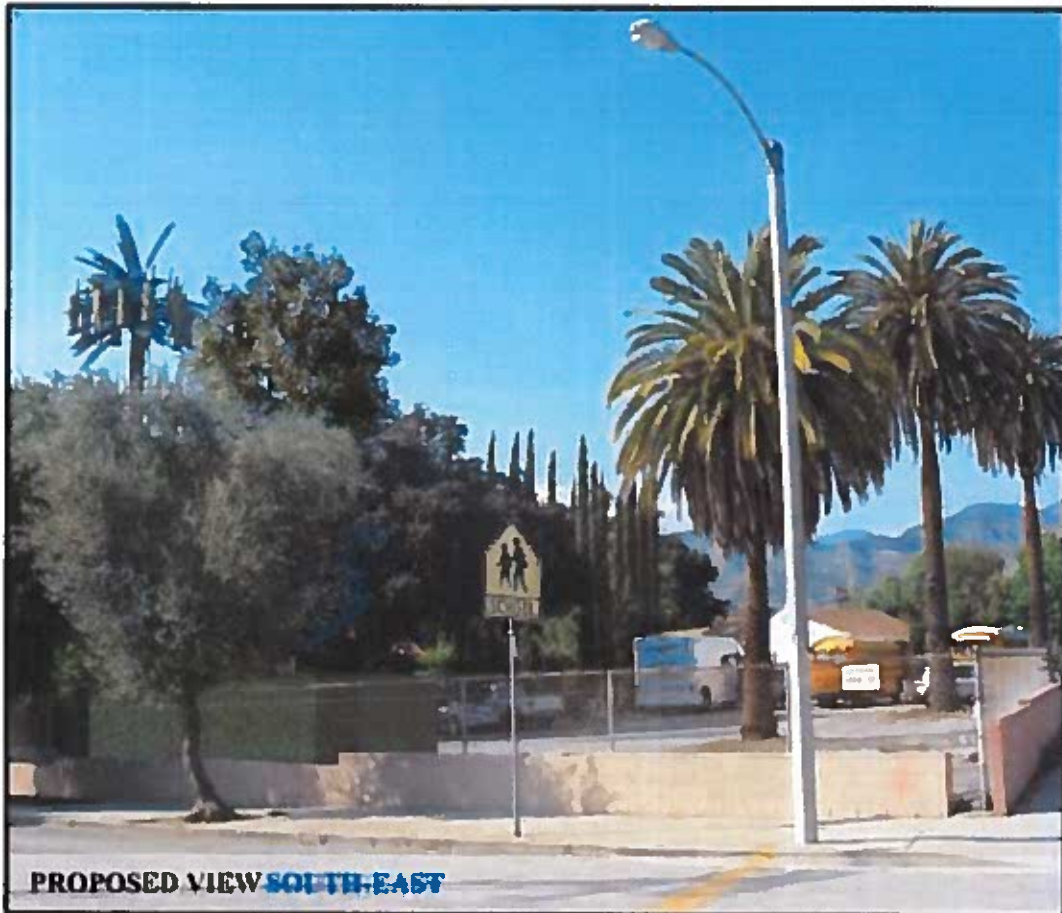
New Monopole/Tower Facilities

Without any viable collocation or rooftop alternatives, Verizon Wireless next reviewed the area for properties that would allow for a new monopole/tower facility, finding the following 5 potential alternatives – see following pages.

4. Sacred Heart Parish Directory – Proposed Facility

Address: 2949 Lincoln Avenue, Altadena

Zoning: R1-7500



Verizon Wireless proposes to place its antennas on a 49' foot high antenna support structure disguised as a eucalyptus tree. Antennas will be concealed within faux foliage and branches, and branches will extend an additional five feet above the structure, providing a realistic appearance. Antennas will be covered with eucalyptus tree socks for further concealment, and the pole will be covered in bark cladding. The treepole will be placed within a lease area which will also contain radio cabinets and a standby generator to provide continued service in case of emergency. The lease area is located on the south side of the property, near the Sprint facility, and within a dense tree area that dominates the property. The site location will be located about 60' from Lincoln Avenue and about 150' from the nearest residence.

The "mono-eucalyptus" design allows Verizon Wireless to mount its antennas at a centerline of 41 feet, the height necessary to serve the Significant Gap, while minimizing visual impacts. As shown in the coverage maps provided with the *Loma Alta RF Justification Letter 5.18.16*, the Proposed Facility is placed in an ideal location such that all three of its antenna sectors will provide new in-building coverage and offload network traffic from the antenna sector serving much of the gap area that is nearing capacity exhaustion, providing required coverage and network capacity to serve the Significant Gap. This is Verizon Wireless's "least intrusive" location for the Proposed Facility.

5. Lucy's Place

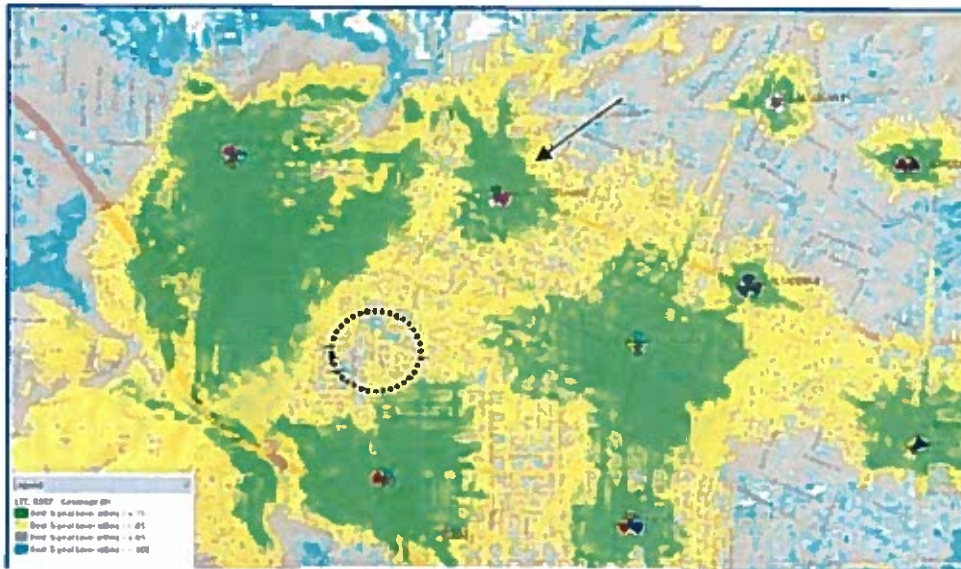
Address: 3025 Lincoln Avenue.

Zoning: C2

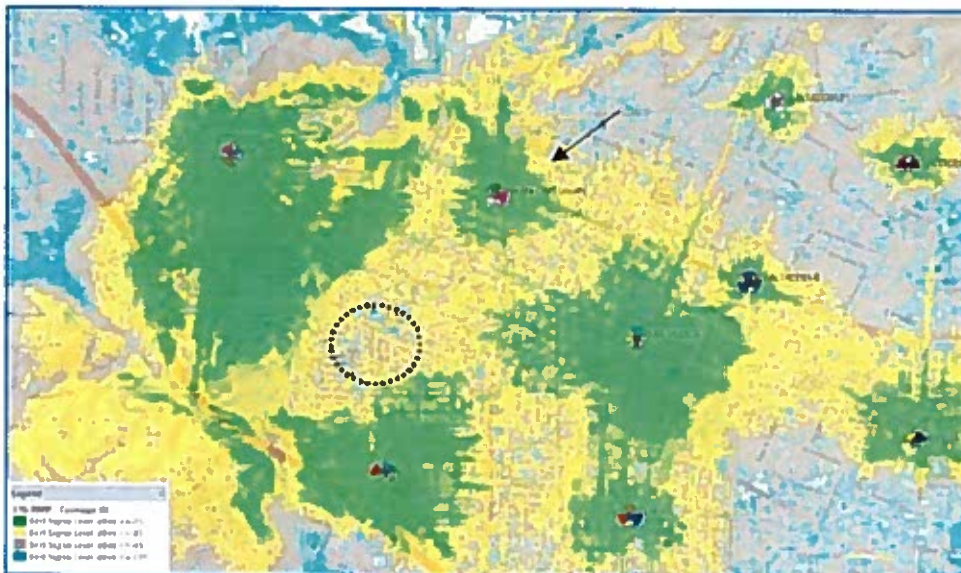


This location is a small commercially zoned property north of the proposed facility. Although zoned commercial, the project location would be located about 40' from the nearest residence behind the property. This property has no trees of any size so the proposed facility would be highly visible to the public and highly visible to adjacent residences. The project would also result in the removal of commercial parking spaces as there is no "extra ground space" for the wireless facility.

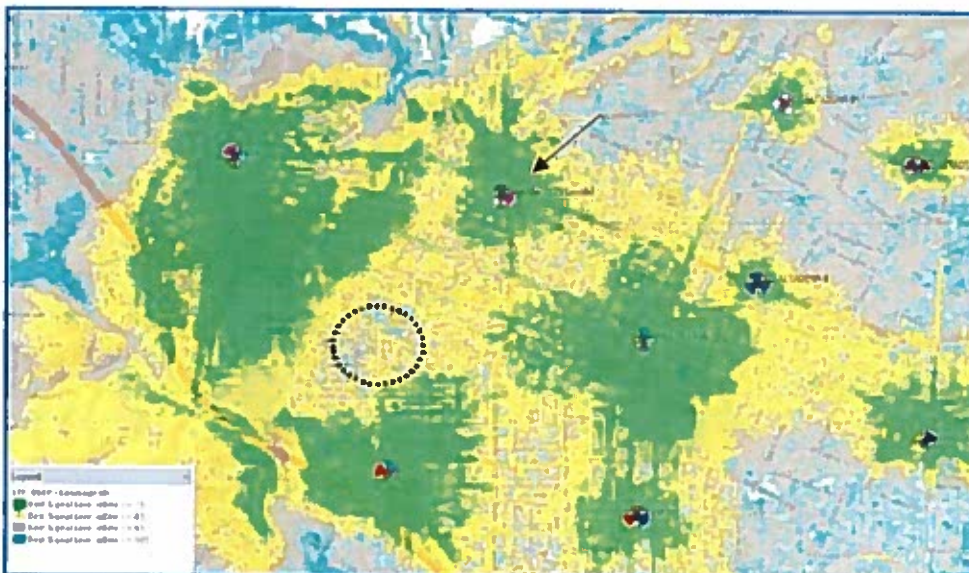
This location is also not technically viable for closure of the Significant Gap. Coverage plots were prepared at the same antenna centerline heights analyzed for the proposed facility location at 2949 Lincoln Avenue (33', 41' & 57'). As shown on the following page, this location, at all heights, leaves a gap in service south and east of the location. Verizon Wireless considers this location less technically viable and more intrusive to the public than the proposed location at 2949 Lincoln Avenue.



3025 Lincoln Avenue – 33'



3025 Lincoln Avenue – 41'



3025 Lincoln Avenue – 57'

6. Motherland Fashions

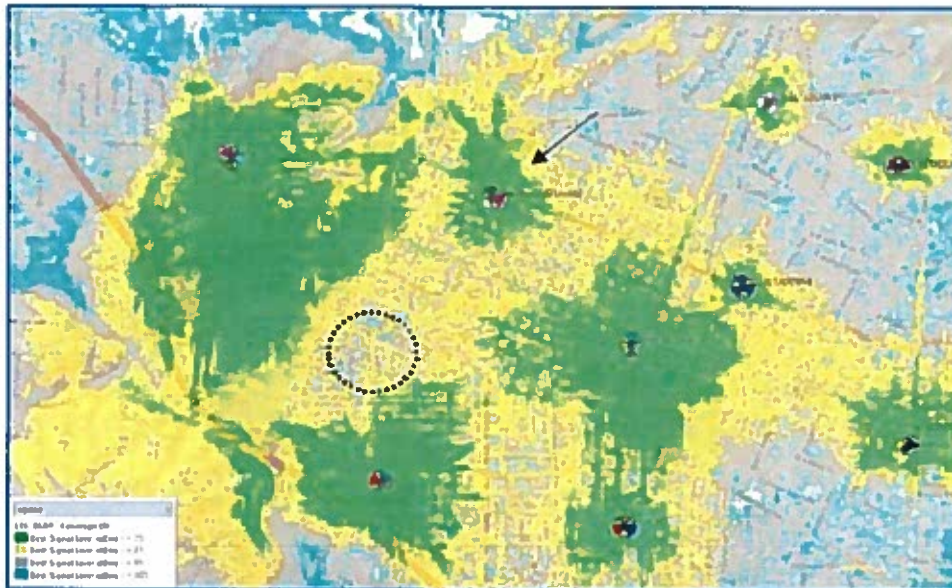
Address: 3045 Lincoln Avenue, Altadena

Zoning: C2

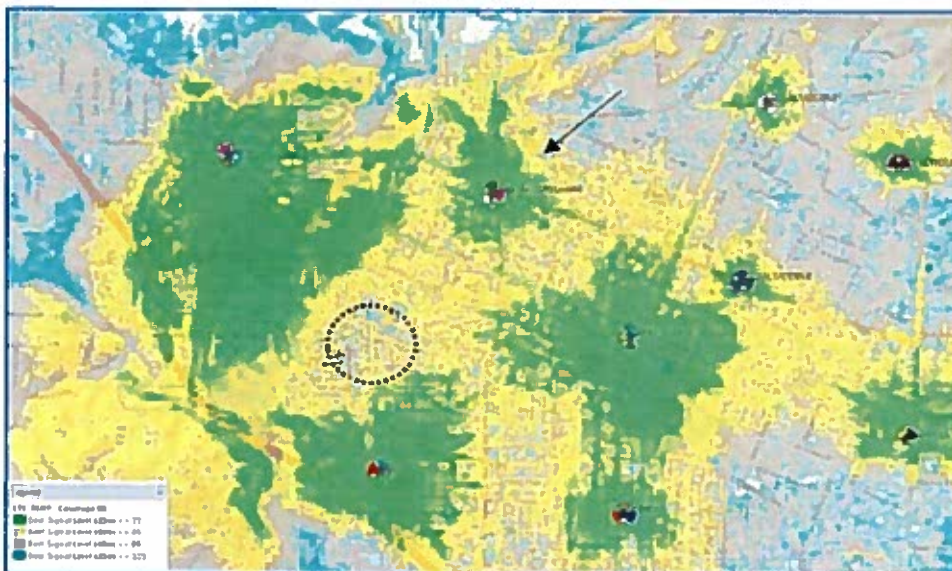


This location is also a small commercially zoned property north of the proposed facility. Although zoned commercial, the project location would be located about 70' from the nearest residence behind the property. This property has no trees so the proposed facility would be highly visible to the public and highly visible to adjacent residences. The project would also result in the removal of commercial parking / loading spaces as there is no "extra ground space" for the wireless facility.

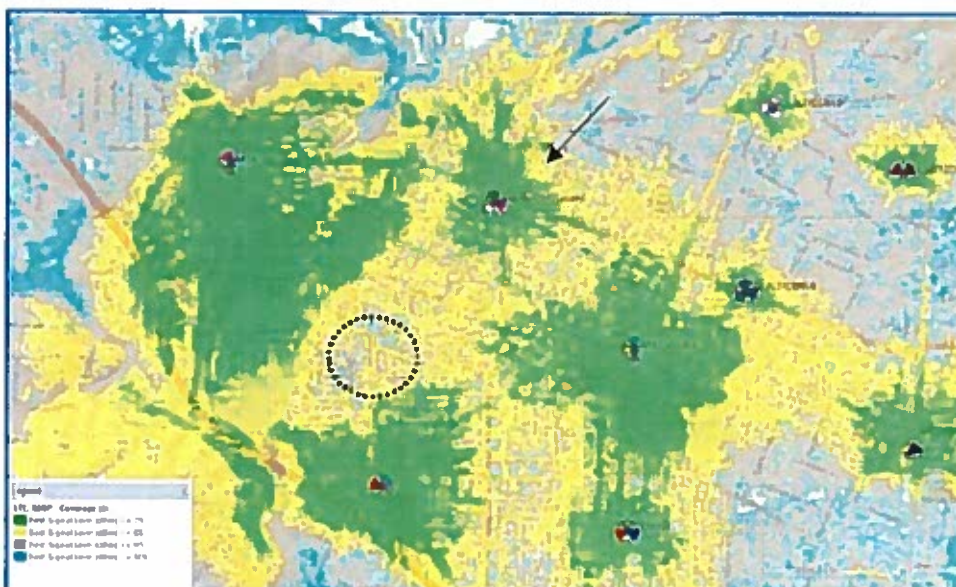
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3045 Lincoln Avenue – 33'



3045 Lincoln Avenue 41'



3045 Lincoln Avenue – 57'

7. S & A Smog Check

Address: 3081 Lincoln Avenue, Altadena

Zoning: C2



This location is also a commercially zoned property north of the proposed facility. The entire property is used for smog check purposes (parking, travel, etc.) so there is no space on the property for a new Verizon Wireless facility. Although zoned commercial, this property directly abuts residential zoning. If space was available, this location would be highly visible to the public, and would be less technically viable for Verizon Wireless. For these reasons, Verizon has determined this location is not viable.

8. Rite Cleaners

Address: 3053 Lincoln Avenue, Altadena

Zoning: C2



This location is also a small commercially zoned property north of the proposed facility. The property owner was not interested in leasing space to Verizon Wireless so this location is not viable. If space was available the location would not be less intrusive than the proposed facility, would require removal of commercial parking spaces, and would be less technically viable for Verizon Wireless.

Conclusion

Verizon Wireless has reviewed eight alternatives to serve a Significant Gap in the Altadena area of Los Angeles County. Based upon the standards identified in the County's Municipal Code, the Proposed Facility – with antennas concealed in a tower resembling a eucalyptus tree – clearly constitutes the least intrusive location for Verizon Wireless's facility under the values expressed by the County of Los Angeles regulations,

Loma Alta
County of Los Angeles
Alternative Site Locations



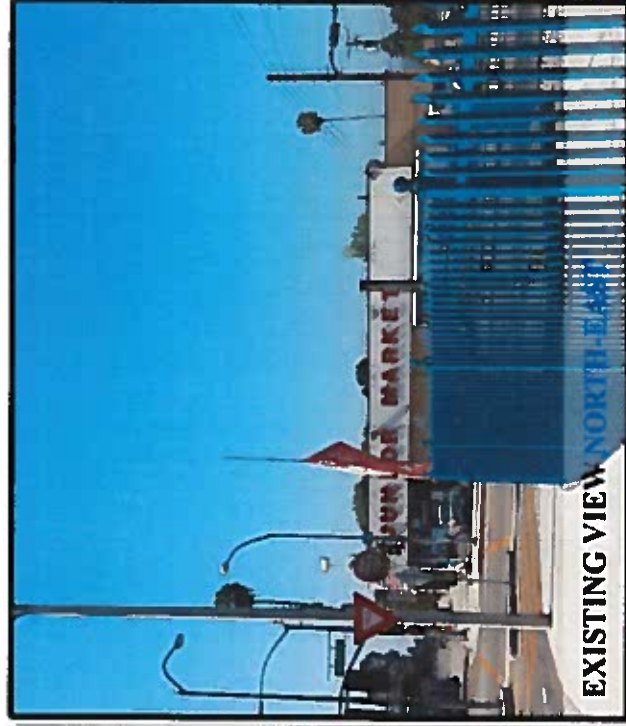
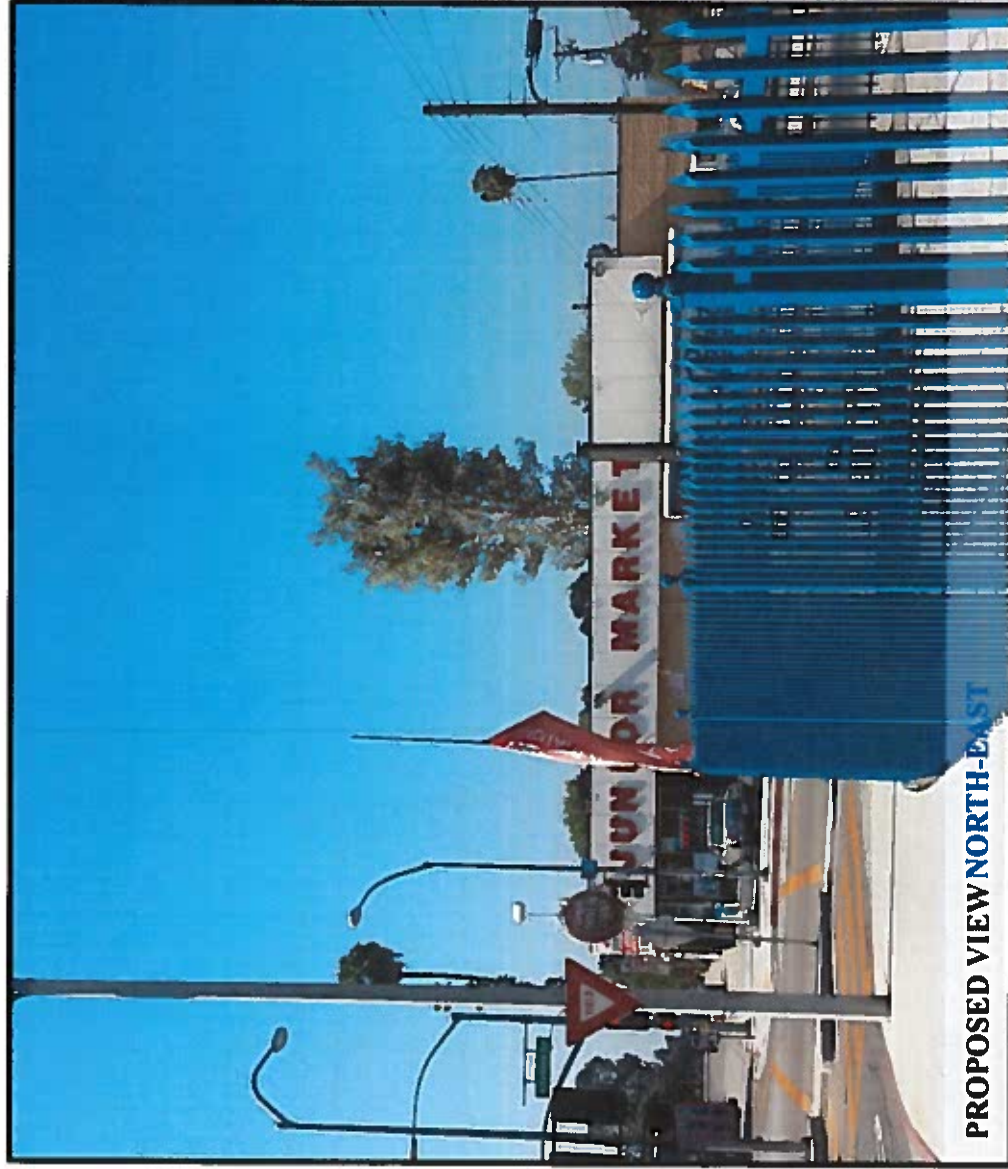


Loma Alta

3045 Lincoln Ave., Altadena, CA 91001



Eukon Group
65 Post, Suite 1000 - Irvine,
CA, 92618 - (949) 553-8566



SITE COORDINATES

Latitude: 34.197920°

Longitude: -118.159317°

APPLICANT

Verizon Wireless
15505 Sand Canyon Ave.
Building "D", First Floor,
Irvine, CA 92618



SHEET NUMBER

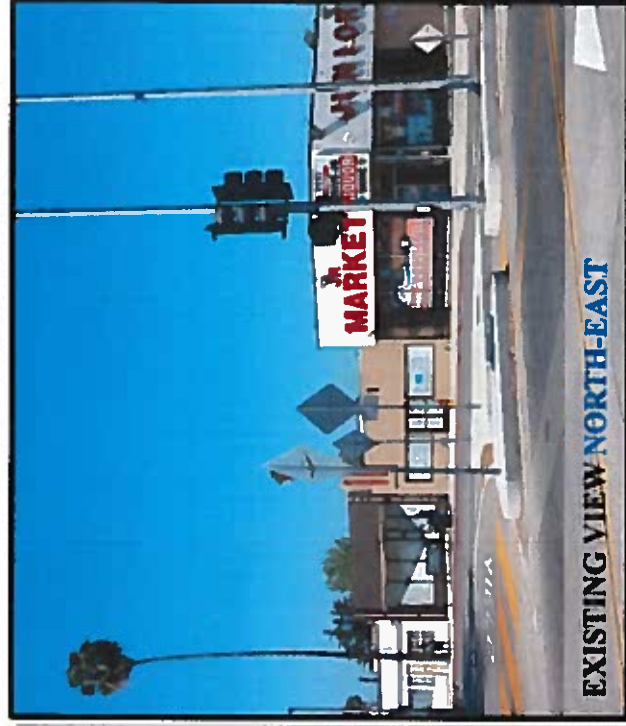


Loma Alta

3045 Lincoln Ave., Altadena, CA 91001



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CA, 92618 - (949) 553-8566



SITE COORDINATES	
Latitude:	34.197920
Longitude:	-118.159317
APPLICANT	
Verizon Wireless 15005 Sand Canyon Ave. Building "D", First Floor Irvine, CA 92618	
SHEET NUMBER	
2 / 4	





Loma Alta

3045 Lincoln Ave., Altadena, CA 91001



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SITE COORDINATES

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15505 Sand Canyon Ave.
Building "D", First Floor,
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SHEET NUMBER





Loma Alta

3045 Lincoln Ave., Altadena, CA 91001



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SITE COORDINATES

Latitude: 34.197920°

Longitude: -118.159117°

APPLICANT

Verizon Wireless
15505 Sand Canyon Ave.
Building "D", First Floor
Irvine, CA 92618



SHEET NUMBER

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4



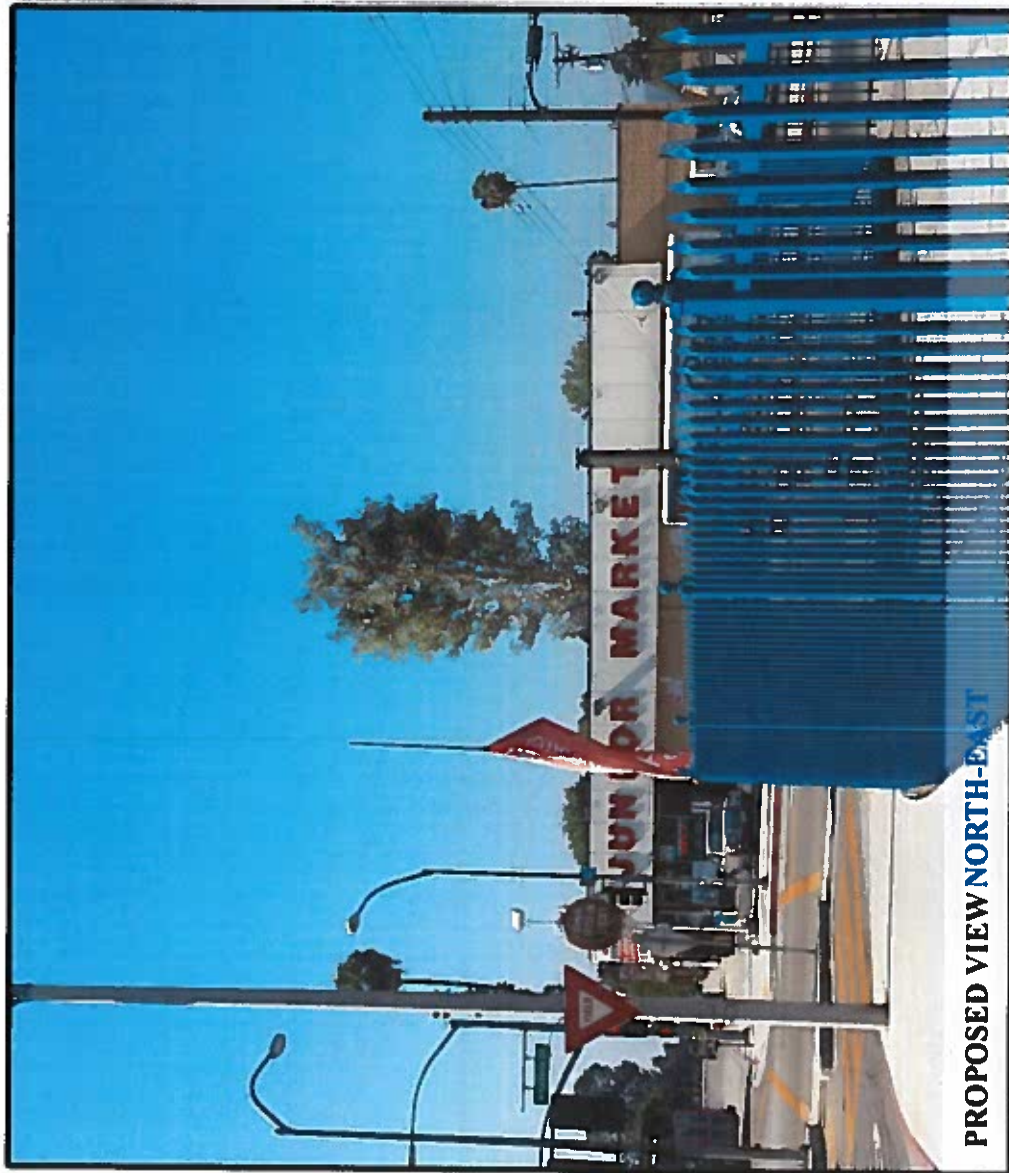
Loma Alta

3045 Lincoln Ave., Altadena, CA 91001



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CA, 92618 - (949) 553-8566



PROPOSED VIEW NORTH-EAST



EXISTING VIEW NORTH-EAST



SITE LOCATION

SITE COORDINATES

Latitude: 34.197920°

Longitude: -118.159317°

APPLICANT

Verizon Wireless
15505 Sand Canyon Ave.
Building "D" - First Floor,
Irvine, CA 92618



SHEET NUMBER



Loma Alta

3045 Lincoln Ave., Altadena, CA 91001



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APPLICANT

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15505 Sand Canyon Ave.
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Irvine, CA 92618

SHEET NUMBER

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4

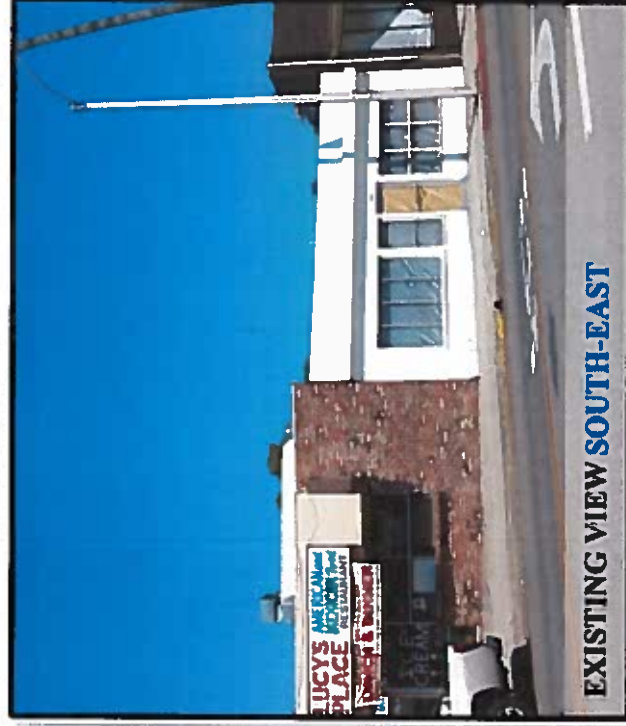


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CA, 92618 - (949) 553-8566



SITE COORDINATES

Latitude: 34.197920°

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APPLICANT

Verizon Wireless
15505 Sand Canyon Ave.
Building "D", First Floor,
Irvine, CA 92618



SHEET NUMBER



Loma Alta

3045 Lincoln Ave., Altadena, CA 91001



Eukon Group
65 Post, Suite 1000 - Irvine,
CA, 92618 - (949) 533-8566



SITE COORDINATES

Latitude: 34.1079203

Longitude: -118.1593177

APPLICANT

Verizon Wireless
15505 Sand Canyon Ave.
Building "D", First Floor
Irvine, CA 92618

SHEET NUMBER



**DRAFT FINDINGS OF THE HEARING OFFICER
AND ORDER
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
PROJECT NO. R2015-02353-(5)
CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. 201500095**

1. The Los Angeles County ("County") Hearing Officer conducted a duly-noticed public hearing in the matter of Conditional Use Permit No. 201500095 ("CUP") on June 21, 2016, September 6, 2016 and November 1, 2016.
2. The permittee, Verizon Wireless ("permittee"), requests the CUP to authorize a new Wireless Telecommunication Facility (WTF) disguised as a eucalyptus tree in the parking lot of an existing church rectory ("Project") on a property located at 2949 Lincoln Avenue in the unincorporated community of Altadena ("Project Site") in the R-1-7500 Zone pursuant to Los Angeles County Code ("County Code") section 22.20.100.
3. The Project Site is 0.8 acres in size and consists of one legal lot. The Project Site is mostly rectangular in shape with flat topography and is developed with a rectory and a spill over parking area.
4. The Project Site is located in the Altadena Zoned District and is currently zoned as R-1-7500 (Single Family Residence with a Minimum Lot Area of 7,500 square feet).
5. The Project Site is located within the LD (Low Density Residential) land use category of the Altadena Community Plan Land Use Policy Map.
6. Surrounding Zoning within a 500-foot radius includes:
 - North: R-1-7500, C-2 (Neighborhood Business), R-3 (Limited Density Multiple Residence)
 - South: R-1-7500
 - East: R-1-7500
 - West: R-1-7500
7. Surrounding land uses within a 500-foot radius include:
 - North: Single family residences, various commercial uses
 - South: Church, single-family residences
 - East: Single-family residences
 - West: Single-family residences
8. Ordinance No. 1494 was adopted on September 12, 1927, which created the Altadena Zoned District and established the R-1 zone on the subject property.

Zone Exception Case 1041 was approved on February 2, 1944 to establish a church and school on the R-1 property immediately to the south of the subject property.

Ordinance 5541 was adopted on May 9, 1950, which established the R-1-7500 zone on the subject property.

Zone Exception Case 2063 was approved on June 6, 1955, which authorized additions and expansions to an existing convent at the site.

Zone Exception Case 5341 was approved on November 12, 1959, which authorized additions to the existing church and school on the property to the south.

Project No. R2005-03535-(5)/Conditional Use Permit No. 200500226 was approved on January 16, 2007, which authorized the construction, operation and maintenance of a new wireless telecommunications facility at the subject site, consisting of a 53 foot tall monopalm and associated equipment shelter. This permit expires on January 16, 2017.

9. The site plan for the Project depicts the subject property with access from Lincoln Avenue. It shows the existing rectory building and associated spillover parking lot. It also shows the location of the proposed Verizon WTF, as well as the existing Sprint WTF at the site.
10. The Project Site is accessible via Lincoln Ave to the east.
11. The site plan indicates the spillover parking areas for the rectory. These provide ample parking spaces to serve the parking needs for the regular maintenance activities needed for the WTF located at the site.
12. Three other alternative sites were considered for the project, particularly near the intersection of Lincoln Avenue and Altadena Drive, where there is a cluster of commercial uses. These alternative sites were deemed infeasible since they were to the north of where the facility needs to be located in order to address the significant gap in coverage.
- 12-13. In addition, in response to a request by the Hearing Officer, the applicant submitted an expanded Alternative Sites Analysis that reviewed a total of eight alternatives, including the proposed project design of a mono-eucalyptus tree and a co-location design on an existing Sprint mono-palm facility at the proposed project site. The analysis also indicated why the alternative sites and designs were not feasible and therefore, why the applicant has chosen the proposed project site and mono-eucalyptus design.
- 13-14. Wireless phone coverage maps indicate that this facility is necessary to ensure that there are no gaps in wireless phone coverage in the area.
- 14-15. A Network Justification Statement dated May 18, 2016 by Amanda Lam, Radio Frequency Design engineer, was also prepared and submitted for the site indicating the reasons why a co-location with the existing Sprint facility at the site was not feasible, according to the applicant.

- ~~15. Prior to the Hearing Officer's public hearing on the Project, Regional Planning staff determined that the Project qualified for a Class 3, New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures, categorical exemption from the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code section 21000, et seq.) ("CEQA"), the State CEQA Guidelines, and the Environmental Document Reporting Procedures and Guidelines for the County, because the faux-tree, antennas and equipment proposed to be installed by the Project are small and limited in scale and impacts.~~
16. Pursuant to the provisions of sections 22.60.174 and 22.60.175 of the Zoning Code, the community was appropriately notified of the Project's public hearings by mail, newspaper, and property posting.
17. Prior to the hearing, the applicant has also attended a number of community meetings and has redesigned the project to address some of the concerns raised by the community as well as by staff. This includes the redesign of the project from an originally proposed mono-palm to the new, proposed mono-eucalyptus tree facility.
18. Staff received three emails from the community opposing this project, as well as another proposed mono-palm by Verizon located at 2949 Lincoln Avenue. Staff also received two petitions opposing both projects. The first petition contained 27 signatures from the residents of the area and the second petition contained the signatures from the first petition as well as 30 signatures from parents of children attending the Pasadena Waldorf School. Both petitions indicate their opposition to new cell phone towers in the neighborhood of Altadena as well as near their children's schools in Altadena or Pasadena. The cover email of the petition also raised the issue of over concentration of cell phone towers in the area which was the historically lower income side of Altadena.
19. On June 21, 2016, the Hearing Officer, heard a presentation from staff, opened the public hearing and requested that the applicant provide additional information regarding the Alternative Sites Analysis conducted for the project. The Hearing Officer also requested additional information regarding County Counsel's legal opinion on staff's proposed recommendation. To allow the applicant and staff time to submit and review the requested information, the Hearing Officer continued the public hearing to September 6 and subsequently to November 1, 2016. (Additional information ~~to be inserted after the public hearing to reflect hearing proceedings on November 1, 2016.)~~
20. The Hearing Officer finds that the WTF and accessory equipment, are consistent with the LD (Low Density Residential) land use category of the Altadena Community Plan.

This purpose of this category is to maintain existing single-family residential. The proposed WTF ~~will~~would be disguised as a eucalyptus tree which will ensure that the existing predominantly residential character of the surrounding neighborhood is maintained. The proposed WTF would also support~~s~~ several of the policies of this Plan and is therefore consistent with the underlying land use designation of the Community Plan.

21. The Hearing Officer finds that the WTF and accessory equipment are consistent with the requirements of the R-1 Zone. Pursuant to Section 22.20.100 of the Zoning Code, radio and television towers are permitted in the R-1 Zone provided a conditional use permit has first been obtained and while such permit is in full force and effect in conformity with the conditions of such permit. ~~If approved, this conditional use permit will satisfy this requirement.~~

22. The Hearing Officer finds that the proposed project does not meet the Conditional Use Permit Burden of Proof requirements pursuant to section 22.56.040 of the County Code and Subdivision and Zoning Ordinance Policy No. 01-2010.

The applicant is required to substantiate all facts identified by Section 22.56.040 of the County Code, as well as Subdivision and Zoning Ordinance Policy No. 01-2010. The applicant has satisfactorily justified the selection of the project site for the proposed facility, but has not submitted sufficient proof to show that the applicant has undertaken and completed a good-faith effort to co-locate the proposed facility on the site of another such facility on the same location. There is an existing Sprint facility on the same site as the proposed Verizon facility and the applicant has not submitted adequate justification as to why co-locating the proposed facility with the existing one is not technically feasible.

23. The Hearing Officer finds that the requested use at this location will not adversely affect the health, peace, comfort or welfare of persons residing, working or commuting in the area, will not be materially detrimental to the use, enjoyment or valuation of property of other persons located in the vicinity of the site, and will not jeopardize, endanger or otherwise constitute a menace to the health, safety or general welfare of the public.

The WTF provides necessary wireless telecommunication service to the area that helps promote the safety, security and general welfare of the residents, workers and commuters in the area. Furthermore, being designed as a faux-eucalyptus tree and located in the middle of an existing parking lot, the WTF is of adequate distance and camouflaging from public areas.

24. The Hearing Officer finds that the proposed site is adequate in size and shape to accommodate the yards, walls, fences, parking and loading facilities, landscaping and other development features prescribed in this Title 22, or as is otherwise required in order to integrate said use with the uses in the surrounding area.

The project site is approximately 0.8 acres with an unused spillover parking lot which easily accommodates the proposed WTF. The WTF is adequately disguised and set back from public areas.

25. The Hearing Officer finds that the proposed site is adequately served by highways or streets of sufficient width and improved as necessary to carry the kind and quantity of traffic such use would generate, and by other public or private service facilities as are

required. The proposed site is adequately served by public utilities as required by the proposed use.

The existing rectory, as well as the WTF, are directly adjacent to Lincoln Avenue and W. Mariposa St, major roadways, and have access to energy and other public utilities.

26. The Hearing Officer finds that pursuant to sections 22.60.174 and 22.60.175 of the County Code, the community was properly notified of the public hearing by mail, newspaper, and property posting. Additionally, the Project was noticed and case materials were available on Regional Planning's website and at the Altadena Library at 600 E. Mariposa St., Altadena, CA 91001. On October 6, 2015, a total of 361 Notices of Public Hearing were mailed to all property owners as identified on the County Assessor's record within a 1,000-foot radius from the Project Site, as well as 4 notices to those on the courtesy mailing list for the Altadena Zoned District and to any additional interested parties. The noticed agenda item was previously continued on November 17, 2015, January 5, 2016 and March 21, 2016 without the public hearing being opened.
27. The location of the documents and other materials constituting the record of proceedings upon which the Hearing Officer's decision is based in this matter is at the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, 13th Floor, Hall of Records, 320 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, California 90012. The custodian of such documents and materials shall be the Section Head of the Zoning Permits East Section, Department of Regional Planning.

BASED ON THE FOREGOING, THE HEARING OFFICER CONCLUDES THAT:

- A. The proposed use with appropriate conditions will be consistent with the adopted General Plan and the Altadena Community Plan.
- B. The proposed use at the site will not adversely affect the health, peace, comfort or welfare of persons residing or working in the surrounding area, will not be materially detrimental to the use, enjoyment or valuation of property of other persons located in the vicinity of the site, and will not jeopardize, endanger or otherwise constitute a menace to the public health, safety or general welfare.
- C. The proposed site is adequate in size and shape to accommodate the yards, walls, fences, parking and loading facilities, landscaping and other development features prescribed in this Title 22, or as is otherwise required in order to integrate said use with the uses in the surrounding area.
- D. The proposed site is adequately served by highways or streets of sufficient width and improved as necessary to carry the kind and quantity of traffic such use would generate, and by other public or private service facilities as are required.
- E. The applicant has not undertaken and completed a good-faith effort to co-locate the proposed facility on the site of an existing facility on the same property.

THEREFORE, THE HEARING OFFICER:

~~1. Finds that the Project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to section 15303 of the State CEQA Guidelines (Class 3, New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures categorical exemption); and~~

~~2.1.~~ Denies Conditional Use Permit No. 201500095.

ACTION DATE: ~~June 24~~November 1, 2016

~~MBMM~~:CN

~~6/16~~10/18/2016

c: Zoning Enforcement, Building and Safety